WIGTON

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF

Dr. W. P. Briggs,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH.

FEBRUARY, 1898.

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ANNUAL REPORT

ON THE HEALTH OF THE

RURAL DISTRICT OF WIGTON

FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER, 1897.

To the Chairman and Councillors of the Wigton Rural District.

GENTLEMEN,—

Again I have the honour to present to you my annual report on the health of our district for the year 1897, and I do so with very real pleasure, for I am able to lay before you an array of statistics of a very satisfactory kind, which is always gratifying to a health officer. I have spoken of the statistics for the year as very satisfactory, and while this is quite true, still they are not, all round, as markedly so as was the case in 1896 : but this was a very exceptional year, and it hardly derogates from the present, that it has not attained the same high state of excellence. In one pleasing, and important, respect, it even

surpasses its immediate predecessor, viz., in the reduced number of notifications, and in a diminished rate of mortality from infectious diseases. The general death-rate is, however, a little increased, as is also that of children under one year of age. The number of notifications sent in was 65, or 6 fewer than in the previons year. Out of this number, only 6 terminated fatally. It is very gratifying to learn that every year since this Act was adopted the number of infectious cases has steadily decreased True, there is not much difference between the number reported this year and 1896, but in the four years immediately preceding we had a considerable increase. This I attribute in some measure to the generosity of your Council in supplying disinfectants gratis, and to the work being carried out in the great majority of cases under the supervision of your Inspector instead of in the nominal and perfunctory manner which too often was the case previously.

SUMMARY OF STATISTICS.

Births.

There have been 306 births registered during the year in the whole of the three divisions of the district.

	Males.	*Females.*	*Total.*
Caldbeck	65	48	113
Wigton	54	46	100
Aspatria	43	50	93
	162	144	306

This is equal to a birth-rate of 23·2 per 1,000, which is lower than that of the preceding year, and considerably lower than that of England and Wales, and cannot be regarded otherwise than a low one. The birth-rate of the district has been steadily decreasing during the last four years, though the population has not appreciably diminished. The Wigton sub-district is the only one in which the births are more numerous than in 1896; and in the Aspatria sub-district we have exactly the same number as were registered in the Wigton division during 1896.

The Caldbeck district has a birth-rate of 27·03 per 1000.

Wigton...	...	...	...	19·5	,,
Aspatria	...	...	...	24·2	,,

General Mortality.

The number of deaths registered during the year reached 182—an increase of 17 on the previous year, and equal to an annual rate of mortality of 13·8, which is very satisfactory, and only an increase of 1· on the rate of mortality of 1896. The deaths occurred in the different districts in the following ratio :—

Caldbeck.....	51.	Annual rate,	12·2	per 1000.
Wigton	73.	,,	14·2	,,
Aspatria	58.	,,	15·1	,,

If reference be made to Table A, which is appended to the report, it will be seen that 34 deaths occurred under one year, 11 between 1 and 5, 8 between 5 and 15, 8 between 15 and 25, 55

between 25 and 65, and 66 in people over 65 years. Diphtheria was the cause of 3 deaths, scarlet fever of 2, puerperal fever of 1, rheumatic fever of 1, consumption of 15, inflammatory diseases of the chest 31, 8 from injuries; 24 people died from heart disease, and 97 from various other causes. Malignant disease, or cancer, and senile decay, are the chief causes of death in persons over 65, being responsible for nearly half the number at these ages. The greatest age reached was was 97. Cancer appears to be on the increase, and this applies to each of the three divisions of the district equally. The main incidence of death from this disease is at ages between 45 and 75 years.

Infant Mortality.

This means the proportion of deaths under 1 year of age to the number of births registered, and is expressed as being so many per 1000 births. I regret to state that in this direction we have a marked increase on the previous year, which had a very low rate of infant mortality. The whole number of deaths under 1 year was 34, or 11 more than in 1896. This means that of every 1000 births 111 do not survive the first year of life. The chief causes of death in these cases have been premature birth, convulsions, and marasmus, or wasting. I have so frequently in my reports referred to the factors which I regard as mainly productive of this waste of infant life, that I will not do so again, contenting myself by reiterating the statement that I still regard improper feeding as chiefly responsible. I do not think that the sanitation of a district has much to do with its causation.

The following table shows the rate of infant mortality in the three sub-districts :—

	Infant Mortality under 1 year.	*Rate per 1000 births.*
Caldbeck	11 ...	97
Wigton	8 ...	80
Aspatria	15 ...	161

Zymotic Rate.

This means the deaths resulting from the 7 principal zymotic diseases of the Registrar General, viz., small pox, measles, scarlet fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, "fever," and diarrhœa. Under the term "fever" we include typhus, typhoid, simple, and continued fever.

I am very pleased to emphasise the fact that our zymotic rate of mortality for the present year is an exceedingly low one—lower than that of 1896, and represented by 0·3 per 1000, which would be difficult to improve upon. In the whole district there have been only 5 deaths, viz., 2 from scarlet fever, and 3 from diphtheria. The scarlet fever cases occurred in the Wigton sub-district, the diphtheria in Caldbeck sub-district. In the Aspatria district no death has resulted from zymotic disease.

Zymotic Rates of Sub-Districts.

	Deaths.	*Rate per 1000.*
Caldbeck	3 ...	0·7
Wigton	2 ...	0·3
Aspatria	*nil*	*nil*

Notifications.

65 notifications have been sent in, or 6 fewer than in 1896, 15 fewer than in 1895, 46 fewer than in 1894, and 54 fewer than in 1893—the first year the Act was adopted. These 65 cases include 30 of scarlet fever, 17 of diphtheria, 2 of puerperal fever, 3 of typhoid fever, and 11 of erysipelas. The following tables show how these are apportioned to the three divisions of the district :—

	Scarlet fever.	*Diphtheria.*	*Puerperal fever.*	*Typhoid.*	*Erysipelas*
Caldbeck ...	4	17	...	...	3
Wigton ...	8	1	2	1	3
Aspatria ...	18	1	...	2	5
Total ...	30	19	2	3	11

Much more work is now done to cope with infectious disease, almost every case being visited, verbal or printed instructions given, and disinfectants supplied gratis. Several medical gentlemen in attendance on cases have very kindly given me written information as to the probable origin of the outbreaks. Proper disinfection is carried out by your inspector, and printed instructions issued ; but notwithstanding these efforts the outbreaks often attain greater dimensions than they ought ; and we shall never be able thoroughly and confidently to cope with infectious disease till our district is supplied with a steam disinfector and infectious hospital.

Now that a nursing association has been begun in Carlisle for the county—by way of commemorating the Jubilee—which has for its aim and object the training of nurses, and sending them out on very reasonable terms, I think we might derive material aid in combating epidemics of infectious disease if your Council were to employ one or more when such contingencies arise. Very often medical men are not called to such cases, and great ignorance is displayed not only in treating them, but in endeavouring to protect others. Their severity might certainly be lessened, and the risk of infection minimised, if a trained and capable woman were on the spot to give advice. This is especially true of measles and whooping cough, two diseases which your officers find almost practically impossible to exert any influence over, either in the way of stopping their progress or warding off fatal consequences. I desire to draw the attention of the Council to this matter.

SANITATION.

Inspections.—A great number of inspections for special purposes have been made, and the following villages have been carefully gone over :—

Allonby,	Glasson,
Hayton,	Little Bampton,
Langrigg,	Whitrigglees,
Caldbeck,	Fingland,
Hesket-New-Market,	Greenspot.

Many nuisances were reported to the Council, and improvements promised by the owners or occupiers without further trouble. Many of these have been remedied.

Drainage improvements have been, or are in process of being effected at Bromfield, Bowness, Glasson, Dundraw, Thursby, Caldbeck, Westnewton, Langrigg.

The following are still without drainage; and I have recommended during the year for them a system of sewering, but this has not been done, chiefly on the ground of expense :—

Welton,	Greenspot,
Upton, Caldbeck,	Parton,
Whitrigglees,	Blencogo.

Eight new privies have been erected : 5 with large privy middens converted into pail closets; and 14 gully traps substituted for open grates.

Water Supply.—The water supply of the district is mainly derived from wells, with the exception of the villages of Ireby, Torpenhow, Hesket-New-Market, parts of Sebergham and Caldbeck, which have public supplies from springs at a distance. Few complaints have been received during the year as to scarcity. A scheme is under consideration for supplying Upton, Caldbeck, which is very badly in want of water. Many of the villages possess very doubtful wells; but to obtain other sources of supply is made out to be incommensurate with their abilities and means.

Analysis has been made of samples of water from the following places :—

Warwick Hall well—Polluted.

Sceugh Farm, Hesket—Polluted.

Bromfield public well—Satisfactory.

Church Hill Farm well—Polluted.

Port Carlisle, Steam Packet Hotel—Satisfactory.

Well at Mr. Whitfield's, Glasson—Polluted.

Scarlet Fever.—30 cases of scarlet fever have been brought to my notice during the year. No case has been removed to an infectious hospital, and all have been visited. The disease was epidemic at Blennerhasset in the beginning of the year, and I was unable to find the original source of infection. Several cases occurred at Glasson, and the infection was brought from Carlisle by a girl who had been residing in a house where it prevailed. Two of these cases proved fatal. The farmyard was in a most foul and insanitary state, and much good sanitary work has been effected since the disease broke out. One case occurred at Dundraw, and also owed its origin to infection caught at Carlisle. In November two cases occurred at Allonby, and were quickly followed by three more. I was unable to trace the origin of this outbreak, but am of opinion that cases of a mild nature had occurred, which were not notified, and spread the disease through infection at school. I heard, on visiting the village, accounts of children who had had a red rash, and sore throats, but who were not sufficiently ill to be put to bed !

Diphtheria.—17 cases of this disease have been notified, and occurred at Newlands House, Sebergham, Ireby, and Hesket-New-Market. The great majority of the cases prevailed at the latter village. Three deaths occurred, and nearly all were treated with antitoxen. Microscopical examination was made of the membrane in several cases, and the diagnosis verified. Defects of drainage, dampness of sub-soil, and foul ashpits were observed at some of the houses ; in others nothing prejudicial was observed.

Typhoid Fever.—Two cases of this disease occurred in November at Blennerhasset, in two children in one house, and were attributed to drinking water from the River Ellen, which receives much sewage. No sanitary defects were observed on the premises. The sale of milk was discontinued for some weeks, the parents of the children keeping two cows and selling it. A third case occurred at Bowness-on-Solway, in a school teacher, who was removed to the fever hospital at Carlisle. Insanitary ashpit on premises.

Erysipelas.—11 cases were notified, but no conditions likely to favour the malady were observed.

No cases of measles, whooping cough, or infantile diarrhœa have come before my notice during the year.

The dairies, lodging houses, and slaughter houses have been visited and inspected, and found very satisfactory. A second lodging house was registered at Glasson under the sanction of your Council, after careful examination as to the sanitary condition and environment.

During October I met a committee composed of representatives from the Aspatria Urban Council, the Abbey Holme Urban, and the Wigton Urban and Rural, with respect to my recommendation that they should combine in building an infectious hospital and disinfecting chamber. After some discussion on the matter no agreement, excepting a negative one, was arrived at.

I remain, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

W. PERRY BRIGGS.

TABLE A.

TABLE OF DEATHS DURING THE YEAR 1897 IN THE WIGTON RURAL DISTRICT CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO DISEASES, AGES, AND LOCALITIES.

Names of Localties.	Mortality from all causes, at subjoined ages.								Mortality from subjoined causes, distinguishing Deaths of Children under 5 years of age.									
	At all ages	Under 1 year	1 and under 5	5 and under 15	15 and under 25	25 and under 65	65 and upwards		Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Puerperal	Rheumatic Fever	Phthisis	Br'chitis, Pneumonia, Pleurisy	Heart Disease	Injuries	All other Diseases	Total.
Caldbeck... ...	51	11	2	3	1	17	17	Under 5 ...	...	2	...	...	...	1	...	...	8	11
								5 upwards ...	...	1	...	...	5	7	6	2	19	40
Wigton	73	8	5	4	3	24	29	Under 5 ...	...	...	...	...	...	3	...	...	9	12
								5 upwards ...	2	...	1	1	6	12	10	2	27	61
Aspatria	58	15	4	1	4	14	20	Under 5 ...	...	..	...	...	...	4	...	...	14	18
								5 upwards ...	...	...	...	...	4	4	8	4	20	40
Totals	182	34	11	8	8	55	66	Under 5 ...	...	2	...	...	...	8	...	...	31	41
								5 upwards ...	2	1	1	1	15	23	24	8	66	141

TABLE B.

TABLE OF POPULATION, BIRTHS, AND OF NEW CASES OF INFECTIOUS SICKNESS, COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH, DURING THE YEAR, 1897.

District.	Population at all Ages.		Registered Births	Aged under 5 or over 5	New Cases of Sickness in each locality coming to the knowledge of the Medical Officer of Health					
	Last Census	Estimated to middle of 1897.			Scarlatina	Diphtheria	Membranous Croup	Fevers. Enteric or Typhoid	Fevers. Puerperal	Erysipelas
Caldbeck ...	4352	4180	113	Under 5	2	9	2	...	..	..
				5 upwards	2	8	...	...	...	3
Wigton ...	4716	5126	100	Under 5	6	1	3	...	...	...
				5 upwards	2	...	...	1	2	3
Aspatria ...	5185	3830	93	Under 5	11	...	...	...	...	...
				5 upwards	7	1	1	2	...	5
Totals ...	14253	13136	306	Under 5	19	10	5	...	...	...
				5 upwards	11	9	1	3	2	11